Decline in Export

2029. SHRI V. N. GADGIL: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pelased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the rate of export has declined enormously Since March, 1998;

(b) whether the decline in the rate of export will create balance of payment problems; and

(c) if so, what action Government have taken in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) As per the provisional Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics (DGCI and S) data, the growth rate of exports for the period April-January 1998-99 in rupee terms was 11.98 percent. In dollar terms the exports showed a decline of 1.98 percent.

(b) and (c) Decline in the rate of exports affects the foreign exchange receipts thereby exerting pressure on the balance of payment position. A number of steps have been taken to promote exports which include lowering of interest rates on export credit, reduction in transaction cost through decentralisation and simplification of procedures and various other measures as enumerated in the Exim Policy. Steps have also been taken to promote exports through multilateral and bilateral initiatives, identification of thrust sectors and focus regions. The Government is also initiating action through seveal measures to facilitate investment in sectors with strong export potential, encourage diversification of India's export basket, address infrastructure shortcomings, improve export facilitation measures and thus enhance the overall competitiveness of Indian exports. The Government is according high priority to exports and all necessary steps are being taken to put exports on high growth trajectory.

Pricing of tea

2030. SHRI PARAG CHALIHA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that at present Indian tea is priced at about Rs. 63 per kg.;

(b) whether it is also a fact that the to-be imported Sri Lankan tea is selling at about Rs. 45 per kg.;

(c) whether Government have decided to import Sri Lankan Tea without imposing any import duty thereon; and

(d) if so, the reasons and justifications, therefor?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) The average price of tea at different auctions during Feb, 1999 was between Rs. 64 & 66 per kg.

(b) to (d) Government has not taken any decision to import Sri Lankan Tea without imposing any import duty.

Offices of APEDA in Himachal Pradesh

2031. SHRI ANIL SHARMA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of offices and locations of APEDA in Himachal Pradesh;

(b) the assistance given to apple growers of H.P especially in packaging during the last three years, year-wise; and

(c) the steps taken by Govt. to inercase the apple export during the last three years, year-wise and for finding new areas for export?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) There is no APEDA office Icoated in Himachal Pradesh. However, the APEDA Head Office in New Delhi caters to the Northern region including Himachal Pradesh, In addition, the Punjab State Agro Industrial Corproation at Chandigarh has been nominated to function as a Virtual Office. It provides

services to growers of Himachal Pradesh also.

(b) and (c) The Government has been implementing several assistance schemes and taken various steps to boost production and export of horticultural products including apples from Himachal Pradesh on a continuous basis. These include:—

(i) Providing assistance for raising small and large nurseries for production of good quality planting material, upgradation of technical know-how of farmers through demonstrations, training and publicity, rejuvenation of old orchards, area expansion, supply of minikits for vegetables, improving productivity and training of farmers under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme on Integrated Development of Tropical, Temperate and Arid Zone fruits.

(ii) Provision of soft loans for setting up of grading/processing centres, auction platforms, ripening/curing chambers and quality testing equipment.

. (iii) Providing financial assistance to exporters/growers/ Cooperative Societies for development of in-frastructural facilities such as purchase of specialised transport units, establishment of precool-ing'cold storage facilities, Inte-grated post-harvest handing sys-tems (pack houses);

(iv) Grant of financial assistance for improved packaging, and streng-thening of quality control including installation of latest ISO 90001/HACCP equipments at export units;

(v) Grant of air freight subsidy for export of selected fresh vegetables and fruits.

(vi) Arranging promotion campaigns such as buyer-seller meets and participation in important inter-national fairs and exhibitions;

(vii) Settign up of integrated cargo handling and cold storage facilities at various International Airports for handling export of perishable items such as fresh fruits and vegetables;

(viii) Providing technical advisory services and other supports services to, trade and industry including training of farmers for export production, quality control packaging, transport, etc.

(ix) Research efforts towards adoption to technologies for increasing the shelf life of furits and vegetables such as Compressed/ Modified Atmosphere containers for sea transport, establishment of vapour heat treatment facilities, etc. Kinnaur apples from Himachal Pradesh has been identified as one of the potential varieties for exports. In the last crop season, Himachal Pradesh Marketing Corporation (HPMC) had undertaken trial shipment of Kinnaur apples through refer container to UK.

(x) Provision of assistance for using international standard packaging material specified through the Indian Institute of packaging. Under this scheme 30 percent assistance with a ceiling of Rs. one lakh per beneficiary is given to exporters for use of packaging material specified and adopted by IIP/APEDA.

(xi) Assistance is provided for pro-duction and marketing of hor-ticultural produce under NHB's Post Harvest Management Scheme through the State Hor-ticulture/Agriculture Departments. Assistance given for purchase of plastic crates and card board boxes to apples growers of Himachal Pradesh under the NHB scheme during

the last three years has been as follows:

Year	No. of Plastic crates'tardboard boxes
1996-97	2,00,000
1997-98	18,000
1998-99	20,000

Review of Export Schemes

2032. SHRI SURESH KALMADI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government are taking a fresh look at some of the Export schemes to make them compatible with the WTO norms;

(b) if so, what are the details of such schemes; and

(c) whether it will involve fundamental restructuring?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) to (c) Review of the Exim Policy and procedures is an ongoing process. The revised edition of the Export Import Policy and Hand Book of Procedures incorporating the latest changes in the Exim Policy and procedures is expected to be notified at the commencement of the next financial year.

Strengthening of Export-Oriented Units

2033. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Federation of Indian Export Organisations has suggested several measures to strengthen the base and content of Export-Oriented Units (BOU) and units set up in the export processing zones;

(b) if so, the reaction of Government thereon;

(c) whether suggestions for extending modvat credit EOUs and for simplification of various procedures for the benefit of EOUs have been received; and

(d) if so, the reaction of Government thereto?

THh MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) Suggestions have been received, including from Federation of Indian Export Organistions (FIEO), for change/ modifications in Chapter 9 of Export-Import Policy pertaining to Export oriented Units and units in Export Processing Zones.

(b) to (d) These suggestions would be kept in view while formulating proposals for amendment of the Export-import Policy.

Import of Sugar

2034. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that global sugar imports are likely to decrease by about 2 per cent this year;

(b) whether most of the countries have reduced their imports;

(c) whether it is a fact that our country has increased the imports;

(d) if so, the reasons for such increase in imports;

(e) whether Government propose to take steps to reduce import of sugar in our country;

(f) if so, the details thereof; and

(g) if not, the reasons thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) and (b) As per the Statistical Bulletin issued by the International Sugar Organisation, London, some countries have increased their imports while some have reduced it.